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DE RUEHPL #0403 3431050  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 091050Z DEC 09  
FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4879  
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0258  
RUEHWD/AMEMBASSY WINDHOEK 0131  
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 000403

SIPDIS

AF/E FOR MARIA BEYZEROV

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/07/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [CH](#) [SE](#)  
SUBJECT: SEYCHELLES OPPOSITION BOYCOTTS OPENING OF  
CHINESE-BUILT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUILDING

Classified By: CDA BARRIE WALKLEY FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (SBU) On December 4, The Seychelles National Party (SNP), the main opposition party in the Seychelles, boycotted the inauguration of the new Chinese-built Seychelles National Assembly building. The official inauguration ceremony was attended by President Michel, former President James Mancham, the Chinese ambassador Weng Weiguo, cabinet ministers, Chief Justice Frederick Egonda-Ntende, the speaker of the Namibian National Assembly Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab (guest of honor), members of the National Assembly from the ruling party, and members of the diplomatic corps.

¶2. (C) Wavel Ramkalawan, head of the SNP and leader of the parliamentary opposition, acknowledged China's generosity, but publicly announced on the SNP website that the "SNP feels that the building housing the institution that symbolizes our country's democracy should have been erected from resources of the Seychelles rather than be granted by another sovereign nation." Ramkalawan's comments in a private conversation with Poloff were more direct and pointed. He stated that "receiving a building which houses our democracy from a foreign government that doesn't believe in a multi-party democracy and where the leaders are not freely elected is a slap in the face to the people of the Seychelles." He criticized the Office of the President for failing to use the inauguration to show democracy in action and not just in words. The official position of the SNP is that all the personalities represented by the institution of the National Assembly -- including the Speaker, leaders in the house, and of all registered political parties -- should have played a central role in the opening ceremony. Ramkalawan said he is angry that the foundation stone of the building -- a building where the Seychellois constitution is enshrined and a building that should be the pride of the nation -- bears an inscription only in Chinese (and not in English, French or Creole -- the languages of the Seychelles). Ramkalawan fully expects to be criticized for the opposition boycott, but believes the action was necessary as a symbolic act designed to "get people thinking about democratic principles."

¶3. (SBU) The National Assembly is only the first of several Chinese government construction projects in the Seychelles. A large primary school is nearing completion. The Anse Royal Hospital is under construction and expected to be finished by the second quarter of 2010. The Chinese Government has also signed an agreement to build a new Supreme Court building, which is scheduled to begin construction in 2010. Ramkalawan objects to the decision to accept Chinese construction of the Supreme Court building, given the PRC's "questionable judicial system." Press releases revealed that the Chinese government contributed approximately ninety percent of the cost of the National Assembly building and the total cost of the Supreme Court building and the hospital.

14. (C) COMMENT: Ramkalawan is irritated, if not offended, by the Chinese construction of the National Assembly building, and it is thus with glee that he has seized on the inauguration of the building as an opportunity to lambaste the government. It is doubtful, however, that much of the Seychelles population shares his resentment regarding the Chinese, seeing instead the benefits of schools and hospitals. END COMMENT.  
WALKLEY